

# **XINACHTLI SPEAKS FROM A TEXAS DUNGEON**



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This week, we're sharing an interview with Xinachtli, an anarcho-communist Chicano political prisoner held in the McCConnell Unit of the Texas prison system. Xinachtli, whose name is Nahuatl for "seed" is also known by his state name of Alvaro Luna Hernandez. Xinachtli spoke to us recently about his views on the white supremacist, colonial system of the so-called USA, the legacy of genocide of indigenous peoples in the southwest of Turtle Island, his jailhouse lawyering and his upcoming parole bid.

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**TFSR: If you could please introduce yourself with your name, your location, your gender pronouns, that would be really awesome.**

**Xinachtli:** Okay. My name is Xinachtli. I go by that name, which is my adopted indigenous name, which means germinating seeds in Nahuatl dialect. My slave name is Alvaro Luna Hernandez. I am 71 years old. I am a recognized Chicano political prisoner. I'm calling from Supermax Control Unit in the McConnell Unit, part of the Department of Corrections Prison System in Beeville, Texas.

**TFSR: Yeah, thanks a lot for taking the time to chat with me. I really appreciate it. Where did you want to start this conversation, Xinachtli? How do you want to start the story?**

**Xinachtli:** Well, I believe one of the foundational elements of this discussion has got to be the historical basis of where I'm at, where this society is in history, especially Texas history, with settler colonialism, white supremacy, plantation slavery, deeply embedded, not only within the psyche of those that rule Texas right now... I mean, when you look at the local evening news, and you see what's going on here in Texas, and the rise of what I see as a fascist movement spearheaded by the political rulers in Texas, which is historical, because they're all militarizing the border, especially in Eagle Pass, Texas, because they have a significant Confederate history among the states, you know what I'm saying? That's the foundation of colonization. That's the foundation of the force assimilation that I was subjected to, living in a racially segregated society, an all-white police force, and just being ruled by the iron fist of colonizers, like the Texas Rangers. This is the foundation that I lived in.

**TFSR: Yeah, and as you point to being a part of the Confederacy, even before the Mexican-American War, was for the purpose of white settlers being able to own slaves on the territory that had belonged to the state of Mexico that they had stolen from indigenous peoples.**

**Xinachtli:** Yes. Through, of course, two colonial wars, the so called "Texas War of Independence," which began in 1830, and then the Mexican-American War of 1846 that ceded all these territories that were possessions of Mexico, like all the northern Mexican states like Tejas, and then on to the rest of the US southwest under the Gadsden Purchase, which was in 1853, which sealed the US colonization of the US southwest.

**TFSR: Yeah. Do you want to give some more context from that period up to when you were born in the 1950s. I think was '52, right?**

**Xinachtli:** Yes, I was born in May of 1952 in a racially segregated society, which was a rural community. For example, 50% of the populace was Mexican Americans, but we used to live in isolated parts of the community, and it was a ranching cattle industry town. There was a big university there, Sul Ross State University, named after Lawrence Sullivan Ross, who was a Confederate General. The university there in Alpine, Texas was named after this Confederacy general who was also a Texas Ranger and twice governor of the state of Texas under the Confederacy's Republic of Texas back then in the 1800's when all these lands were stolen through all of the colonial wars.

**TFSR:** Can you talk a little bit more about the Texas Rangers? I know, it's something that you've done some study and writing on yourself. A lot of people around the US who are going to hear this, or around the world, won't have necessarily heard of them or maybe be familiar with the crappy Chuck Norris TV show.

**Xinachtli:** Yes, well, the Texas Rangers are legendary in the colonial rule. They were enacted by the father of colonialism, Stephen F. Austin. They have always been a brutal force who committed massacres against Mexican and indigenous native populations in Texas. This is well-documented, but they have escaped justice because politicians always want to censor for that type of history, which also connects to the anti-critical race theory movement that you see going on where teaching of history is criminalized. Professors that teach at universities are sanctioned if they continue to teach true history.

That's part of the historical erasure. They want to erase our memory. They want to erase their ugly history because their ugly history is what's causing their demise. So, they have to resort to the politics of fear. That's what's going on even in Texas right now, because Texas again, and in history—may I repeat, again—the fascist movement has taken center stage. Way back in the colonization of Texas, Texas played a vital role in Jim Crow. So, this is what's going on right now, as I see it, repeating itself.

The defiance of Texas' political rulers, like the governor of Texas, they don't even abide by their laws. For example, the US Supreme Court, told them to remove those barriers from the Mexican border, from the Rio Grande River, and he's defying that. He picked Shelby Park in Eagle Pass, which has a historical significance under the colonization, because Shelby Park was named after, again, another Confederacy general.

Shelby Park there in Eagle Pass is known as cemetery for the Confederacy where there was the last stand of the Confederacy, where the Union soldiers expelled the Confederate soldiers, and they all fled into Mexico. In fact, history shows

that they even tie a rock with a rebel flag and threw it into the Mexican River right there, into the Rio Grande River.

So, this is history repeating that's itself. The scapegoating of immigrants—we're all criminals, we're all drug dealers, we're all prostitutes, we're gang members. That is part of many features of fascism, a disdain for human rights, a disdain for free speech. The scapegoating of immigrant populations, the scapegoating of the LGBTQ community, people of color, prisoners.

Can you imagine the condition that, for example, I'm living under in the Supermax Control Unit, because those conditions are reflected on the inside, and given prison official's history of using white supremacist gangs to declare war on prison organizers like myself, jailhouse lawyers, or prisoners who are involved in the human rights movement on the inside.

**TFSR: I think you sketch out a very clear lineage between settler colonialism and white supremacy and the experiences that are ongoing today, not only at the border, but in the history books like you say and in the cultural memory. There can't be any room for the fascists for a discussion of wrongs, of these like perfect human founders of this greatest nation in the world, as they like to preach.**

**Could you talk a bit about the conditions at the prison that you're at and talk about the facility and what access to medical care you have?**

**Xinachtli:** Yes. Of course, I've been in prison—this is my second long stint in prison, but I've been involved in basically almost all of the prison struggles, going back to correspondence, going back to the Ruiz v. Estelle prison litigation, which was one of the longest civil rights trials in the history of civil rights jurisprudence. We won a lot of legal victories, but all those victories have been evaporated by right wing administrations who have defied the law—their own laws. They even agreed. They even tricked the Federal Judge William Wayne Justice to sign decrees and stipulations that they were going to do this and they were going to do that.

For example, in the area of out of cell recreation, in the area of showers, in the area of a nutritious diet, in the area of medical care, all those have just been cosmetic changes. They have never really been real, effective, meaningful changes. That is the basis. That's what I tell my friends. This is the fallacy of civil rights under the jurisdiction of Uncle Sam.

I have always preached to the study and struggle groups that I founded inside here to redefine the education of prisoners, and to teach them the true nature of prisons under this rotten, racist capitalist system, which is filthy and corrupt. The whole thing must be dismantled. I believe that as a prisoner, one of the most oppressed—doubly, triply oppressed—segments of US society, I believe I have a

role to play in articulating the anarchist movement, articulating the revolutionary movement, and calling on all our brothers and sisters from this movement to understand that it is about class struggle, it is about us settling our differences and coming together and understanding what is happened, because it is not just a matter of the oppression or the exploitation of working class labor by capitalism, it is also a survival.

We are at a crucial point in civilization, because of the climate crisis that is going on, which also affects prisoners, because the natural disasters that we see happening all over the world, including this fire that's going on right now in the Texas panhandle, is part of the climate crisis, part of the planetary crisis that going on as a result of filthy, wealthy, greedy, capitalist, imperialist pigs. I say that with all sincerity. They care less about human rights, they care less about the human needs of the people. All they care about is hoarding more wealth, controlling global markets, creating more wars.

We see the genocide of the Palestinian people right now. We see what's going on in Ukraine. We see the double standard on human rights. We see how the US government tries to condemn Russia and China and Syria, Venezuela, and all through Latin America about human rights violations while blood drips from their hands because they are war criminals who have never been personally prosecuted. So, I see all that. And I've been writing a lot about that, like on my condemnation of the 200th Bicentennial Anniversary of the Texas Rangers. I did some pamphlets and tried to mail them out, and they were suppressed by the prison, and they wouldn't even let them out. They confiscated them, and I appealed to the corresponding appeal processes, and they denied those appeals and they kept my literature.

This is the same thing that I have been doing for all these years. I'm seeing changes, but a lot of those changes are also part of the transformation that I've been involved with. Not only myself personally, because when I first came to this region, I was a youngster. I was really, truly ignorant of the political movement, so I educated myself about personal insights and political theory and anarchism and revolution and social movements and liberation. The science of revolution and revolution of the science. That is part of the history is going on right now.

For example, right now they're supposed to give us out of cell recreation, they're supposed to allow us to shower every day. We haven't been to out of cell recreation in a long time. Human rights groups like the one in Austin, the Texas Civil Rights Project, they keep promising all these reports about how inhumane these conditions are, but nothing is done. I mean, they just published a new report in December of 2023, called it a "crisis with no end." I'm talking about system-wide conditions. We have an inadequate staff. They can't keep sufficient guards to work in the prison. A lot of them quit. So that's their excuse. But that's not our fault.

If they cannot maintain a constitutional prison under their own laws, then they should shut them down. They should close them down. A lot of prisoners in here are basically nonviolent offenders, but this is the mass incarceration policy of the prison, also known as one of the harshest in the nation, especially when it goes to the imprisonment of ethnic minorities, which constitutes 60-70% of the prison system. There are 160,000 prisoners in Texas right now and the majority of them are Blacks, Mexicans, Native Americans. This is the historical essence of what we're dealing with here in Texas.

Every time there's an election, it's open season on Mexicans, it's open season on the scapegoats of what's going on in this society. The politics of fear, the politics of cruelty take over, and we are ridiculed, we're demonized by all these politicians who have ruled for decades now.

I'm part of that movement. So, that's the repression that I am going through. Just like comrade Sean Swain, who, by the way, please give him my regards.

**TFSR: Yeah, absolutely.**

**Xinachtli:** He has always been really supportive of what's going on with me and my writings and the struggle, and the publications that he created with the Final Straw concerning Ricardo Flores Magón. I always remember Ricardo Flores Magón because he's one of the mentors. You know what I'm saying? He's one of the icons, the history of this brilliant man that we must study, because his ideas become more relevant today on all aspects of the colonization of Texas, political asylum. He was murdered in Leavenworth in 1922. A lot of people don't think he was murdered, but he was murdered. There's no doubt in my mind. Prisoners who were there with him can attest to that. They were silenced.

So that's part of the history that we live right now. I mean, look at me. I never assaulted the Sheriff, he assaulted me. What I did was defend myself and disarm him. He was in the act of pulling his gun to shoot me, to arrest me on a bogus charge. Had I not disarmed him, I wouldn't be here talking to you. I would have been dead a long time ago. They hated me for the simple reason that they have never been able to silence me and never will be. That's why this recording, this testimony that I'm giving right here to you, is part of the preservation.

I tell my friends that we must preserve and display to the world, especially to youth, because that is the future of the world. That is the future of our civilization. They will preserve these testimonials and study this history, study was going on right now in the full reality, like they say, "in full living color." Then we're doomed as a society. But the power to change is in our hands.

We are the oppressed, man, we have the majority. The one-percenters are

not the majority. The only thing that they have on their side is that they own the weapons, they own the money, they own government, they enact all these laws to further suppress the liberation movement that we're trying to build. So as long as we understand that and support each other, I think that there's future in this moment that we're trying to make.

Just like when you suggested that we preserve this... I said, "Yes, absolutely. Anytime. Anytime, I will write, I will speak on anything." Especially now that I'm up for release again. I'm up for parole consideration in August. I mean, all I can do is just hope and dream for freedom. Hopefully they'll let me out. I haven't had a disciplinary citation in I don't remember how long. It's been years, man. More than 10 years. I haven't had a disciplinary case. I've stuck to my work, I've stuck to my job.

**TFSR: You first got your parole visit three years ago, and you got a three-year hit. So now you're going to see parole in August, which is super exciting. I imagine that you're still in the process of working through what you're going to be asking supporters to do for you, but I don't know if you have anything you want to say about fundraising for legal fees or letters of support from folks in the audience, authors or lawyers or whatever people that could try to get word into the parole board about why you should be free, health/human rights defenders or whatever.**

**Xinachtli:** The person in charge of my support letters collection is Christopher Preciado. He's been in touch with the lawyer—who by the way, this lawyer Lori Redman out of Stafford, Texas was hired by the National Jericho Movement who supports prisoners of war, political prisoners out in New York. They hired this lawyer for me. I want to make that clear. They hired that lawyer for me. I mean, certainly appreciate it.

Of course, I've been involved in Jericho for a long time, from the first special international tribunal that was held at Hunter College in New York City in December of 1990. I go way back to that, including the second tribunal that was held in San Francisco, the indigenous special international tribunal. I was free at that time then, and I participated in that tribunal as well. I participated with Jihad [Abdulmumit] who was chair of Jericho in this last tribunal that was held in Columbia University. It was virtual due to COVID-19 and stuff like that.

I have a long history of Human Rights involvement, including my NGO delegate status as a delegate of the International Indian Treaty Council with delegate status before the United Nations. I traveled to Geneva, Switzerland, and I addressed the UN General Assembly in March of 1993 as a free person. I was free then. But I was always involved in community organizations. I was always involved



in building unity among liberation movements about social organizations. I'm talking about around the world. I used the Geneva experience to build relationships with comrades around the world, and a lot of them still involve me and many of them still correspond with me.

I was involved in community organizations in Houston. I was involved in the movement to free the innocent Ricardo Aldape Guerra off of row, which we finally did in 1996. I was the community organizer for him. We protested in the streets, we held hunger strikes outside the governor's mansion in Austin, Texas. We petitioned, and we did this, and we did that. And we finally freed him because the guy was innocent, and he got off of Texas death row. All this now is part of the retaliatory measures that the state of Texas... they never forget.

They never forget my involvement as a release witness. I went before William Wayne Justice in 1993 and testified against prison conditions, against the same officials that hold the key to my freedom right now. So, I understand that. Just remember what happened with the case of Nelson Mandela. In the eyes of the world, Nelson Mandela was a terrorist, but he kept on, and he kept on struggling, and he kept on reaching out to the world, until he was able through the National African Congress build a tsunami of world support that gave him his legitimate place in history as a true freedom fighter which resulted in his freedom. That's the type of support that I'm hoping to build in my case as well.

I will be coming up on parole in August, and Chris is the one who's managing my support letters. He's been talking to the lawyer, and the lawyer says that they want about 10 letters. We can do some more support letters. I guess we can just choose and pick which support letters that are going to be included in the parole packet, because we don't want to overkill with all this paperwork and the parole board. So that's what's going on right now.

**TFSR: That's awesome. We had Kazi Toure on like a month and a half ago to talk about the history of Jericho and what Jericho is up to these days. That's really great to know that they're involved in your support in such a fundamental way.**

**I wonder if you could talk a bit about your experience with Certain Days Calendar as a project, what you get from that, what it means to you? I'm sure people involved in that would love to hear you talk about that.**

**Xinachtli:** Oh, yes, absolutely. I'm part of the inside collective membership. The other inside member was David Gilbert, but he was given clemency by the outgoing governor of New York, Cuomo. So, I was the only one left remaining in the inside collective. Of course, Herman Bell and the other ones were all released or passed away and so forth. So, I'm the only one remaining as part of the Certain

Days Collective, which I've been involved with for many, many years, like Sara Falconer, Josh Davidson...

**TFSR: Daniel McGowan.**

**Xinachtli:** Yes.

**TFSR: Yeah, that's awesome.**

**Xinachtli:** Of course, the 2024 calendar that was published here earlier of the year, they have a piece of art that I submitted of Ricardo Flores Magón. I think it's in the September month of the calendar. That was supposed to have been supported by an essay that I wrote, but this is the essay that the prison system censored. They wouldn't allow me to mail it out. They confiscated it from me. That's part of who they are. That's part of what they do. They don't want me to reach out to the world, to show the world the true nature of this prison system, the hypocrisy of human rights. Supposedly, one of the wealthiest and most representative democracies of this industrialized world, but they don't see the ugliness and the hypocrisy that's going on in relation to human rights, in relation to the oppression of poor people and especially ethnic minorities, Blacks and Mexicans, Latinos, Native American Indians, constituting the great majority of the prison population.

So, yes, I've been involved with Certain Days for a long time, and I love the work that they do. It's very inspiring for me when I see that internationally there's support for political prisoners. And they have done brilliant work, and I'm very proud to be a part of that movement to free all political prisoners because that's who I am.

**TFSR: You have also been a renowned jailhouse lawyer, recognized by a ton of different people. I wonder if you could talk about that...**

**Xinachtli:** That was part of movement that I have been involved in with Certain Days, submitting my art and submitting my essays and just working with them to bring light to the plight of political prisoners. A lot of the world does not know that we exist, especially as relates to the Chicano movement. Just like anything else, organizations come and go. There's the ebb and flow of organizations, just like anything else. People get burned out, and people just drop out for whatever reasons, but there's many of us who have kept the flames of struggle, the flames of social revolution on the inside. It does not matter where they put us.

That's why I adopted the name Xinachtli, which means "seed." They can bury me in a concrete tomb, and I will grow because there's not a dark place that

they can throw me that I will not find light. They cannot repress the idea that I have in my heart, because you can jail the body, but you cannot jail the spirit. That's part of the book that also carries my biography. It was produced in a fourth edition by the Committee to Free American Prisoners way back in the day. I go way back then. Can't Jail the Spirit is the name of the book. You've probably read the one by Matt Meyer, Let Freedom Ring. That that also carries my profile in there. There are several books, like Safiya Bukhari, who's also co-founder of Jericho, in her book, The War Before. I'm also listed on there.

But there has not been sufficient publicity of the Chicano struggle, of the national and colonial struggle. That's one of my critiques. I bring this in light of the sincerity of... Like Assata Shakur once said, "Don't be afraid of criticism. Don't be afraid of self-criticism. We can use that to settle our differences internally and to become stronger." I'm of the school of thought of Assata Shakur, who is in exile in Cuba right now.

We go way back, the Black liberation movement, the Crusade for Justice, the National Chicano Moratorium during the Vietnam War, the Boulder Six, [Reyes Martinez, Neva Romero, Una Jaakola, Heriberto Teran, Francisco Dougherty, and Dlorencio Granado], who were killed in separate car bombings in Boulder, Colorado, May 27th and 29th 1974. To this day, I suspect that it was the dirty hand of government. It was a dirty hand of fascism. Like how they murdered or Orlando Letelier over there in Washington DC. Augusto Pinochet, the henchmen of Augusto Pinochet, Richard Nixon, and the CIA and all those agents of repression, as the Ward Churchill used to call them. I think they're complicit in what happened in Boulder, Colorado.

We were at the peak of the Chicano movement. Police brutality was outrageous, and the Chicano movement was making moves to unite the American Indian Movement—Leonard Peltier and Reies López Tijerina, the March on Washington. We were bringing all these forces together, man. COINTELPRO, this was in the middle of COINTELPRO to suppress the anti-war movement to prevent the rise of a messiah. Stokely Carmichael, Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, Fred Hampton, Mark Clark—these people were murdered by the CIA, man. Because they could not be stopped, so this is what I get my inspiration from.

I know that I'm a target. I have been the target by the government, but it doesn't matter. I'm going to speak up. I don't care where they put me at it. They could put me where they have me now in this cage surrounded by a whole bunch of racist white supremacist gangs. They've got me assigned in court to be considered a psychiatric ward. I'm not a psych patient. I don't take psychotropic drugs, never have and never will. But they got me isolated because they don't want to be organized prisoners. That's their tactic.

This prison is run by the ghost of Dr. George Beto who was a fascist. He

was Professor of Psychology at Houston State University. This is the type of person that history honors as patriots, as heroes. They honor Dr. George Beto in the prison Museum in Huntsville, just like they honor the Texas Rangers in the Hall of Fame Museum in Waco, Texas. Of course, we know about all the all the monuments to the Confederacy and the controversy behind that and the struggle to have them removed. This is part of the ugly history that they don't want to reckon with, so they try to silence people like me. I don't fear anything. I don't fear anything about them because I've gone through unspeakable horrors in this prison, beaten down, sprayed with chemical gas, starved to death. In fact, there was one time where they tried to poison me. They poisoned my food. This is the history that I know. This is the history that made me. They made me. I am a byproduct of their own oppression.

I'm asking readers, I'm asking your audience if they have time to read some of the documents that are available right now. For example, the last petition that was filed by attorneys for the Water Protector Indigenous Environmental Group in Albuquerque, New Mexico by attorney Summer Aubrey, who is an indigenous native American, and Sandra Freeman, who was from Salina, Colorado. She's a Chicana, but they work together with this indigenous group who had a major part in the resistance over there behind the pipeline movement. They filed a complaint with the UN Special Rapporteur on my case, and that's available. I want people to make an effort to reach out to them to get a copy of the document, because this is a historical document. They have to read this. Just like *Rattling the Cages* by Josh Davidson, the prison system here banned it, like they banned many books before, like Robert T. Chase's book *We Are Not Slaves*, like Robert Perkinson's book *Texas Tough*, the unvarnished abuses of Texas prison system.

By the way, Professor Chase just wrote me from Stony Brook University, and they want me to work with them on different projects—book projects, maybe even film projects. They made an invitation to have me as a guest speaker. Technically, that's impossible right now because I'm in prison, but maybe we could do it through Zoom recordings and stuff like that. So, I continue to reach out to many of these organizations and let them know what what's going on.

**TFSR: Yeah, you're staying connected, you're staying a part of things, despite the fact that you're in a prison cell and have been for a long time. One of the things that's been noted about you is—and you've talked about the Ruiz case—but I wonder if you could talk more about jailhouse lawyering as community defense? Does that make sense?**

**Xinachtli:** Oh, yes, absolutely. So, one of the things that I have formed is study and struggle groups. I started as a jailhouse lawyer learning from other more veteran

jailhouse lawyers when I first entered the prison system. They taught me prisoner's rights. So, my idea evolved into political struggle, into revolutionary education, into understanding the true nature of prisons and the capitalist system, the oppression of the poor. So, my study of the law evolved into this. Right now, I am commissioned Field Marshal for Prison Lives Matter under the leadership of Kwame Shakur. He's the chair of Prison Lives Matter, and you can find that online on the internet. Some of my writings have been published there online. In fact, I just submitted a tribute to Malcolm X during his assassination on February the 21st, 1965. That's online. I think Jericho also published it online.

**TFSR: I'll be sure to link to that, for sure.**

**Xinachtli:** That is part of what I'm involved in. One of the concepts that we are working on through Prison Lives Matter, to all these different organizations that were involved in, is to link solidarity between the prison struggle and the community struggle, especially now with the immigrant communities. They need our help. The Palestinian people, they need our help. We have to raise our voice and condemn the genocide that's going on with our taxpayer's money. The Zionist pigs, we have to condemn them, and we have to demand an immediate ceasefire. I mean, if you are not moved by the pictures that you see on your TV set of children reaching out, hungry, to get food, and then being mowed down by Israeli soldiers, then there's something wrong with you.

This is the part of the mental disorders of US imperialism, which would go back to colonialism, which go back to the deformity, of how they have erased our identity, the indigenous identity. I am Chicano, but I don't embrace any part of my Spanish blood in my veins. I reject that. So, I have embraced the indigenous aspect of the blood that runs in my veins. That's who I am.

But back to your question, we trying to develop cadres, a core of disciplined prisoners who are up for release, like myself, who are transforming themselves right now through education, who understand how evilly they have been manipulated by the system. So, we're teaching them to embrace a new ethic, a new revolutionary ethic. So, this is what we're trying to build. We're trying to build a collective of prisoners who are going to be released using the Malcolm X model of prison transformation, to abandon old lifestyles, bad habits, drugs, being gangster, parasites, and to embrace a new ethic, which is care for the community, care for your brothers, care for your sisters. It doesn't matter, it doesn't matter what color they are. They're oppressed.

I wanted to add, this is how we're taking and bringing prisoner unity along all racial lines, because we believe in prisoner unity. That's why they keep transferring me to different units to keep me away from the movement that I started. But

they won't succeed because we always manage to get the word out and then establish our communication. I have also been working with attorney Tyler Walton from the Jailhouse Lawyers Initiative and the Bernstein Institute for Human Rights in New York City. Through Samayra Siddiqui, we're working on what is called the international incarcerated paralegal congress, which is a coalition of incarcerated people like myself who are involved in legal struggle but not necessarily with reliance, that is the salvation or the problems of the world because we understand that that courts control law, and the law has always been used as an instrument of oppression going all the way back to "the law west to the Pecos," the Black Codes, and so forth. Just like Michael Redner, a movement lawyer, wrote in his book, even if we lose the cases in court, we win, because we use that as an experience. We use that as lessons for other people who follow.

Yes, the jailhouse lawyer movement has been very instrumental in my transformation from then to now. That's why I always get involved. I do a lot of legal work. That's part of the struggle. I helped prisoners file lawsuits against the prison, the guards, and conditions and so forth. That's all interconnected. That's one of the principal things that we're doing right now with Prison Lives Matter. You can go online and check all that out. I continue to write tributes to different aspects of history, historical tributes, for example, Malcolm, Black August, Ricardo Flores Magón, the Boulder Six case, so on and so forth. That is part of what I do.

I'm not a writer. I mean, I was a high school dropout. I was actually pushed out of high school. I didn't drop out, they pushed me out. Anyways, once I gained my freedom, I attended the University in Houston. I went there for three years. I never finished because there was so much work to do in the community. That was my main thing. I care less about a degree to put on my wall. I was interested in the issues that were plaguing our community like police brutality and employment discrimination and in all that. I was very involved in that when I was in Houston.

So all that followed me when I moved back to my hometown in West Texas, in Alpine. The police already knew me there because I had one lawsuit. I had convicted in federal court sheriff's deputies for beating on me, beating on me and three other prisoners in the Fort Stockton, Texas county jail, and I won a lawsuit against them. So, they never forget because one of the sheriff's deputies who beat me was a rising star in law enforcement circles. He was up running for sheriff, and with that conviction in federal court I was responsible for ruining his political career, his law enforcement career. I made a clown out of him because they're supposed to have me in a new jail, and we overpowered jailers in January of 1970, and I freed all the prisoners. I opened all the cells and the cell blocks, and I told the prisoners they were free to go. And I took the jailer, locked him in the cell, took his keys, went to the sheriff's arsenal, took all the weapons from the sheriff's arsenal, took the jailers car, and drove into Mexico. I was about 10 miles into Mexico when

they finally caught up with me and we had a gun battle. Nobody was killed, but they recaptured me, and they brought me back to the jail and beat me half to death. That's where the conviction of all these people resulted from their beating in their jail.

As a young man, I was somebody who couldn't adjust to being ruled by fascism, because that's what they were man, police, racist cops were used to patrol the Chicano barrio. Of course, I was young, I was 16 years old. That has always been the problem with me and the police. We've always had confrontations. That was part of what I have always called my natural anarchist history because I could not adjust to the oppression of the institutional racism and the oppression of how I was brought up in a segregated society, segregated school, and so forth. And then sent to prison for something I didn't commit.

I was exonerated but it took me 16 years to do it, and they threw me in this prison system and there was no way but up. I was in the snake pit of a one of the most brutal prison systems in the nation. I didn't say that, a prison expert forensic psychologist said that. You should read the testimony of Dr. Craig Haney, who is still writing about prison, who is still writing about conditions in these prisons. You can go through all the of books. You can go to the legal searches of LexisNexis on prison conditions, and you will not find one article that does not cite the Ruiz case. It's always cited on there as one of the most repressive forms of isolation in solitary confinement that I have dealt with now going for 22, 23 years.

I survived it. I want to reach out to people like yourself and your audience to let them know that this is what's going on behind the scenes and this is my idea. This is what I think it's happening right now in the state of Texas, the rise of fascism. We have to unite, man, we have to fight back, we have to organize a community. And I am right now in here doing my job, doing my work that I love doing, and that's organizing prisoners, watching them grow, like you take your child and you've watched him crawl and you watch him walk and you watch him become a full-blooded adult, and then you see the meaningfulness of your work by them embracing you and showing you love.

I've got friends that they separated us, but they still think about me, and they still write articles, like Monsour who is over there in Ferguson Unit. He just wrote an article about me. He always writes about me with good meaning, with good intentions, because he was one of my students. When you see that, you appreciate that, man, you appreciate the humanity that you bring to people when you lead them to discover their own humanity and their love for justice, their love against injustice. Just like George Jackson said, "Pure hate to pure love." You have got to hate it, and if you don't then there's something wrong with you.

This is the mental deformities that the system of colonialism imposes itself, through social conditioning to brainwashing. Even when I think about my

younger days in school, we had to stand up and we have to pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States, or you will be punished. Don't let the teacher you catch you speaking Spanish! Oh, that's not our native language. If you were caught speaking Spanish, there's like corporal punishment.

That is part of the assimilation process that we've gone through. I've always rejected it. I've always established my own identity. I'm Chicano, man, and whatever I adopted, whether it be my language, Caló, cholo, pachuco, zoot suiter... You call it whatever you want to call it. That was a response, our protest against, white supremacy, against the institutionalization of colonialism, of capitalism. That's part of the mental processes of what capitalism is all about. Capital, the exploitation of the working class, which is something that I hope in my lifetime, we can abolish it, that we can abolish prisons. There's got to be a better way. Like comrade Angela Davis says, when speaking about abolishing prisons, then we also have to consider rebuilding institutions that reflect through justice for our people.

**TFSR: So, you talk about this a little bit in your portion of *Rattling the Cages*, by Josh Davidson and Eric King, talking about when you get out what you're hoping to do, such as doing a speaking tour, rallying other formerly incarcerated folks, and just doing community organizing. I wonder if you could talk a little bit about what your vision is. You talked about the importance of folks behind bars doing organizing, but what sorts of organizing do you want to see happen and get involved with when you get out?**

**Xinachtli:** Part of the thing is that I want to establish some type of speaker's bureau tour going around communities and talking to them about my experiences, my vision for community empowerment, my vision for justice, my vision for establishing the new ethic, like I say all the time, bell hook's community care, community love, community solidarity, community liberation. So that's what I want to do. I want to even look at the idea of creating a podcast and traveling as much as I'm allowed to do, because of course, I'm going to be under some type of supervision, but travel is not going to be anything that they're going to deny me. Maybe for a little while, but then they'll open up my right to travel to different cities and stuff like that, and even around the world. So, I definitely want to do that.

I want to see reach people and especially go to colleges and universities, schools, community forums, like I've always done, like I was doing in Houston back then. And try to preach the gospel of unity, of solidarity, of resistance, of liberation, and calling people to understand the critical time that we live in right now and what's going on all around, fascist movements on the rise, the politics of fear taking over, especially now that we're in these presidential elections, and bring about some clarity with the movement. And hopefully, we can work together



and bring about some unity between the various divergent movements, including the Native American indigenous movements and so forth, and build some type of the United Front coalition and empower people. We have to do that. We've got to empower power people. We've got to go through that transformation process of empowering people, and inspiring people, especially young people, to get involved and show them by my own example. Hopefully, that's what I want to do. Yeah, and hopefully I'll get released soon.

**TFSR: Yeah, that seems like a really good idea, not only to offer the knowledge that you have as an elder, with all the experience that you have fighting back against repression in the streets and behind bars, but also, since you've been in for such a long time and retirement's going to be a hard thing, that also seems like a good opportunity for writing and speaking and getting some fees and support for that sort of work too, so not only giving back to the community, but hopefully the community giving back to you as well.**

**Xinachtli:** That's one of the things that I thought about. I'm going to need whatever support the community can offer me, because almost all of my family has died since I've been in prison. My house is abandoned, empty. My mom, my dad, my brothers, my aunt, they have all died. I have practically no support from some of the existing members, immediate family members. They live their own lives, and I don't bother them. I don't have a pair of socks out there on the street. I don't have a pair of pants out on the street. So, I'm going to need some things, and I'm going to be calling on the community to support me, absolutely. I have no qualms about that. I'm sure that people will respond. That's part of the idea that I have in mind.

**TFSR: That's part of what it is to be in a movement, people supporting our elders.**

**Xinachtli:** Of course, I've got Christopher Preciado. He's been very, very helpful. We've been doing a lot of things. He's going to be in charge of different things for me. So yeah, that's going to be great. We'll see how that develops and see what the parole board is going to say. That's all I can hope for.

So, what do you think? You want to wrap it up?

**TFSR: Yeah, I think so. It's been a real pleasure talking to you, Xinachtli.**

**Xinachtli:** Likewise, if you want to you want to continue to do some other sessions in the future, just contact me and we can arrange for that. I look forward to your support and all that. Thank you. Tierra y libertad. Land and liberty.

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